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Crusade or cooperation? Savary de Brèves's treatises on the Ottoman Empire

The diplomat and scholar François Savary de Brèves (1560-1628), French ambassador to Constantinople (1589-1605) and later to the Holy See (1608-14), has attracted little scholarly attention; he is less a footnote of history and more a footnote in a small handful of monographs.¹ And yet his role in the political, diplomatic and intellectual worlds of early-seventeenth century France was significant. De Brèves negotiated a renewal of the Franco-Ottoman alliance in 1604, securing from the sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) increased commercial privileges for French merchants.² He compiled a set of documents on western traders in the Eastern Mediterranean for use by French diplomats in the Ottoman Empire.³ He established an Arabic printing press, the *Typographia Savariana*, during his residence in Rome.⁴ When he returned to France in 1614 to take up the position of governor to Louis XIII's brother Gaston, the Duke of Anjou (later, of Orléans), he brought with him his press and an impressive collection of oriental manuscripts.⁵ He was a personal advisor to Cardinal Richelieu for whom he assembled thirty-seven Arabic, Turkish and Persian manuscripts.⁶ And he put his intimate knowledge of the Ottoman Empire – having spent over twenty years in the Islamic East – to use in penning two political tracts, the *Discours abrégé des asseurez moyens d'aneantir & ruiner la Monarchie des Princes Ottomans* and the *Discours sur l'alliance qu'a le Roy avec le grand Seigneur, & de l'utilité qu'elle apporte à la Chrestienté*.

These ostensibly contradictory texts – one outlining how to destroy the Turks and the other promoting the Franco-Ottoman alliance – which were published together in the first decade of the reign of Louis XIII are the focus of this article. This study is in line with a movement that has been taking shape over the past two decades and that a collection of essays on the subject has labelled 're-orienting the Renaissance'.⁷ The goal of scholars working under this umbrella has been to shed light on the developments – social, cultural, economic, intellectual and political – of the period that depended on the movement of people,

ideas, skills and goods between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe.⁸ The image of the Ottomans in early modern Europe has been shown to be an ambivalent one, religious hostility clashing as it did with the practicalities of trade and the positive views held by many travellers to the east.⁹ This article explores the early modern image of the Ottomans through the writings of a diplomat who crossed cultural boundaries. In promoting a crusade and championing the Franco-Ottoman alliance, Savary de Brèves's work exemplifies the ambivalent hinge that the Ottomans occupied in early modern European thought. I argue that in spite of the publication of a crusade plan, de Brèves's true intent was to promote the Franco-Ottoman alliance. I will first outline the relations between France and Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, before conducting a close analysis of the *Discours abrégé* and the *Discours sur l'alliance*. Comparisons with other crusade texts will be made in order to illuminate the significance of de Brèves's writing.

Franco-Ottoman relations

De Brèves's treatises have to be understood within the context of the Franco-Ottoman alliance inaugurated in 1536. This pact was born of the two powers' mutual rivalry with the Habsburgs. François I and Charles V clashed in their respective quests for dominance of the Italian peninsula, while Suleiman I struggled with the Habsburg Empire for supremacy in Eastern Europe. After the defeat and capture of François at Pavia in 1525, the French established diplomatic contact with the Ottoman Empire. In the following decade, when François's fears of the growing power of Charles V were intensified following the emperor's conquest of Tunis in 1535, an ambassador was sent to Constantinople. Jean de la Forest was the first of France's permanent representatives at the sultan's court. In 1536 he signed a commercial pact with the Ottomans, signalling the start of a diplomatic alliance between the two powers which endured until Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.¹⁰

Scholarship on relations between the Ottoman Empire and France has tended to identify the treaty as an aberration from conventional Christian diplomatic practice.¹¹ But in fact, putting political considerations above religious scruple was nothing new. During the fifteenth century several Italian states reached diplomatic agreements with the Ottoman Empire. Shortly after the fall of Constantinople Venice negotiated a commercial pact and sent a permanent representative to the Sublime Porte.¹² Charles V sent an envoy to the Ottoman court in 1519, long before François did.¹³ Alliances between powers regularly shifted according to changing circumstances and overtures to the sultan were motivated by diplomatic self-interest. For François, his approaches to the Ottomans were designed to leverage strategic advantage in his ongoing battle for supremacy in Europe and led to joint military initiatives against the Habsburgs. Other powers continued on and off to seek rapprochement with the mighty Ottoman Empire. Even Pope Paul IV was prepared to solicit military aid from the infidel in his territorial disputes with Charles V.¹⁴

Diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire were relatively commonplace, then, but that did not prevent such pacts from being criticised on religious grounds. Crusading rhetoric urged Christian powers to set aside their differences and unite against the common Muslim enemy.¹⁵ The Franco-Ottoman treaty divided public opinion. The Huguenot soldier François de La Noue, for example, condemned it as having ‘contamin[é]’ ‘l’intégrité chrestienne’,¹⁶ whereas Jean de Monluc, French ambassador to Venice, argued that the alliance was in the interests of Christendom.¹⁷ The publication of François Savary de Brèves’s treatises on the Ottoman Empire provides evidence that the French alliance remained controversial in the seventeenth century.

De Brèves stepped into the pragmatic and fluid world of early modern diplomacy in 1585 when he travelled to Constantinople with his relative Jacques Savary de Lancosme, the newly appointed ambassador to the Sublime Porte. Lancosme, siding with the Catholic

League, refused to recognise Henri IV as king and was replaced by his relative. De Brèves used his influence with the sultan Murad III to threaten Marseilles with an Ottoman invasion unless the inhabitants accepted Henri's rule.¹⁸ In 1604 he negotiated a treaty with the new sultan Ahmed I, which confirmed French commercial interests and afforded protection to churches, Christian pilgrims, and those travelling under a French banner. After returning to France from his diplomatic posting in Rome, de Brèves had his press publish the forty-eight articles of the 1604 Capitulations in a bilingual French and Turkish edition in 1615. When he fell from favour and was dismissed from his position of tutor to the king's brother de Brèves published the *Discours abrégé* and the *Discours sur l'alliance*, the latter offering a justification of the treaty he had negotiated.¹⁹

Savary de Brèves's treatises on the Ottoman Empire

The titles of Savary de Brèves's political tracts concerning the Ottoman Empire appear paradoxical in intent, with one recommending its downfall and the other championing the French alliance. It may be tempting to suggest that they were written for different audiences at different times or that the author's thinking evolved over time. In fact, de Brèves intended the two texts to be understood in tandem and he published them alongside one another in a volume which also contained a transcription of the 1604 Franco-Ottoman treaty.²⁰ He opens the *Discours sur l'alliance* by stating that the text develops a theme introduced in the *Discours abrégé*, the power of the Ottoman Empire:

Après avoir fait voir par mon precedent discours quelle est la puissance et grandeur de la Monarchie des Princes Ottomans, j'ay creu estre à propos de faire cognoistre les raisons qui obligent le Roy d'entretenir l'amitié que les Roys ses predecesseurs ont contractee depuis cent ans en çà, avec les grands Seigneurs sans aucune interruption, et faire approuver la residence d'un Ambassadeur ordinaire à leur Porte, puis qu'il regarde le bien de son Estat, et cause une notable utilité à tous les Princes de la Chrestienté.²¹

In the editions he published de Brèves placed the *Discours abrégé* first, and it is clear from his turn of phrase at the start of the *Discours sur l'alliance* that he would have the reader study the *Discours abrégé*, which outlines how a crusade could be successful in spite of the strength of the Ottomans, before turning to the *Discours sur l'alliance*, a text which justifies current French policy in light of the Ottoman threat. Accordingly, we shall turn first to the *Discours abrégé des asseurez moyens d'aneantir & ruiner la Monarchie des Princes Ottomans*.

The *Discours abrégé* is an early-seventeenth-century example of a crusade plan. The capture of Constantinople in 1453 had ushered in an era of Ottoman expansion across the Bosphorus westwards into Europe, before they were repulsed at the gates of Vienna in 1529. Nonetheless, the danger was ever present as the Ottoman Empire remained the greatest military power on earth, even though their capabilities were arguably in decline from the late-sixteenth century onwards.²² Fear spurred fantasies of destroying the religious enemy once and for all, and the sixteenth century saw a proliferation of published projects for an attack on Constantinople. Erasmus outlined plans in his 1517 *Institutio principis Christiani* and again in the 1530 *Utilissima consultatio de bello Turcico inferendo*.²³ Instances in the French vernacular include François de La Noue's *Discours politiques et militaires* (1587) and René de Lucinge's *De la Naissance, duree et cheute des estats* (1588).²⁴ The trend continued into the seventeenth century. As well as de Brèves in the *Discours abrégé*, Maximilien de Sully, Chief Minister to Henri IV, presented a plan in his *Œconomies royales* (1638), and in 1686 the soldier Jean Coppin published *Le Bouclier de l'Europe, ou la guerre sainte, contenant des avis politiques et chrétiens qui peuvent servir de lumière aux rois et aux souverains de la Chrestienté, pour garantir leurs Etats des incursions des Turcs et reprendre ceux qu'ils ont usurpés sur eux, avec une relation de voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thébaïde et la Barbarie*.²⁵ By this time, diplomatic relations instituted between Christian states and the

Ottoman Porte had led to the recognition of the sultan as the head of a sovereign political entity, and the need to overthrow the Turks became increasingly represented as a political imperative, rather than a theological one.²⁶

Savary de Brèves's account of the Ottomans in the *Discours abrégé* was in line with the tendency to foreground the political threat posed by the Turks. The work opens with the spectre of powerful Ottoman sultans ruling in Europe. 'Ils se sont rendus seigneurs souverains d'une partie de l'Europe, de l'Asie, et de tout plein de pays de l'Afrique,' de Brèves writes. He warns that the Empire could spread further into the continent; the *Grand Seigneur* could easily 'ruiner le Royaume de Sicile', for example (p. 11). In fact, 'le repos de l'Europe' is only assured since the sultans 'ont negligé les moyens de mal-faire aux Princes de l'Europe' as they are occupied in fighting the Persians (p. 12). Savary de Brèves deploys his firsthand knowledge of the Empire to assess in detail the strength of the Turkish military:

Avant que de proposer les moyens certains, que les Princes Chrestiens ont de ruiner ceste grande monarchie, je parleray de son espouventable puissance, afin que ceux qui prendront la peine de lire ce mien escrit, cognoissent le pouvoir qu'elle a de mal-faire à l'Europe, et par consequent, le soin que l'on doit prendre d'en empeschet [sic] l'effect. (p. 14)

He states that the Ottomans have over 800,000 troops at their disposal (p. 16). Of all early modern assessments of the military might of the Empire this is the largest figure; François de La Noue, in contrast, had estimated that they were 120,000 in number.²⁷ Strength aside, the menace posed by the Ottomans is not, in de Brèves's account, attributed to their religious beliefs. He notes that 'leur Religion les oblige de croire qu'il y a beaucoup plus de merite à tuer en guerre un Persien heretique, que soixante et dix Chrestiens' (p. 12). As for their motivation in attacking Europe, de Brèves cites nothing more than 'l'ambition des Princes Ottomans' (p. 12) – something with which the Christian princes of early modern Europe would empathise. La Noue had also referred to the ambition of the sultans but, unlike de

Brèves, he had chosen to highlight the religious imperatives of the Turks: ‘L’un des premiers sermens solennels qu’ils font, en prenant leur injuste sceptre, est qu’ils seront ennemis irreconciliables du nom chrestien, et que par guerres continuelles, et toutes especes de cruautez, ils tascheront d’en abolir la memoire’.²⁸ Where La Noue’s emphasis is on holy war, de Brèves indicates that the Ottomans are not quite so zealous: he notes that to conquered peoples ‘on leur laisse la possession de leurs biens, et l’exercice de leur Religion’ (p. 8). Perhaps the most striking contrast between the *Discours abrégé* and other crusade writings of the time is in the language used to describe the Ottomans: nowhere in the *Discours abrégé* or the *Discours sur l’alliance* does de Brèves label them ‘barbares’, a term commonly adopted by early modern writers to deny the humanity of the persons thus described.²⁹

Nevertheless, the *Discours abrégé* is predicated on the assumption that the powers of Europe would want to destroy the Ottoman Empire which ‘a ravallé la grandeur et la gloire de la Chrestienté’ (p. 46). Although Savary de Brèves is keen to stress that ‘[la puissance du Turc] n’est pas aisée à battre, n’y [sic] à vaincre’ (p. 14), the tract sets out how the Ottoman Empire could be overthrown. Their weak spot, he asserts, is the navy: ‘leurs mariniers ne sont pas trop bons’ (p. 29). It was not an especially striking observation. The Battle of Lepanto in 1571, when a league of Catholic powers defeated the Ottomans in a naval battle, had exposed Turkish vulnerability. René de Lucinge had argued that Catholic Europe could expose the Ottomans at sea and conquer Constantinople with a naval armada. De Brèves likewise suggests that the Ottomans could be defeated at sea, but only ‘si la puissance Chrestienne se vouloit unir’ (p. 32). His plan for crusade involves both the Catholic and the Protestant powers of the continent (we will turn later to the question of how likely such a union would be). De Brèves recommends that a union of Spain, France, Venice and the Pope, as well as Protestant England and the Dutch Provinces, could defeat the Ottoman Empire in less than a year if they attack via the Mediterranean before the land forces move in (pp. 34-5).

The *Discours abrégé*, though, is not a project to unite warring Christendom as one; the fact of the matter is that Savary de Brèves considers the Ottoman Empire to be so powerful that it could not be defeated without such a huge combined force:

L'execution de ceste proposition, est une œuvre de Dieu; s'il n'y met sa puissante main, et n'inspire nos Princes tant de l'une que de l'autre creance, il est impossible que les hommes y trouvent un acheminement. D'autre part, il se faudroit despouiller de toute sorte de mesfiance, n'entrer point en dispute sur la difference des Religions, n'estre point sur la démarche de la precedence, les uns avec les autres, ains seulement penser à battre ce puissant enemy (p. 46).

A union of Catholic and Protestant powers, then, is not the desired end point of the project in the *Discours abrégé* but simply the means of achieving the goal of destroying the Ottoman Empire. In this way, de Brèves's view diverges from earlier thinkers on the matter: Lucinge's project involved suppressing Protestant groups before embarking on a crusade, whereas La Noue considered the attack on Constantinople to be part of a mission to reunify Christendom. For Savary de Brèves, confessional differences are not suppressed or dissolved; the adherents of the different Christian 'Religions' should suspend their disagreements in order to work together against the Ottomans. The monarchs involved belong to different faiths ('creance') but they are 'nos Princes' – the possessive adjective here governing a diverse Christendom. Indeed, an acceptance of diversity is crucial to de Brèves's plan; he argues that Orthodox Christians will join the Latin Christians in fighting the Turks: 'Chrestiens sujets du Grand Seigneur [...] se revolteroient à la faveur de nostre armée' (p. 36); 'bien qu'ils [les Grecs] n'ayment pas nostre creance [...] infailliblement ils se revolteroient et prendroient les armes contre luy [le Turc] (pp. 37-8); 'Toute l'Asie est habitée des Chrestiens Grecs et Armeniens' (p.45). The idea of Christians in the Ottoman Empire as a potential fifth column was a commonplace of early modern crusade writing.³⁰ De Brèves does, though, sound a note of

caution, counselling an element of dissimulation – or, more generously, tolerance – on the part of the western Christians in order to keep the Greeks on side:

Il seroit necessaire de ne faire point de difference entre ceux de la creance Grecque, et la nostre; d’ouïr leurs Messes, d’honorer leurs Ecclesiastiques, de faire le signe de la Croix, comme eux, d’approuver leurs jeusnes, et les imiter le plus qu’il seroit possible; de faire cheminer leurs Ecclesiastiques à la teste de nostre armée (p. 42).

Clearly, Savary de Brèves is no ideologue but a pragmatist advocating that religious belief should be no impediment to working together for a particular goal – the same line that we shall see he takes in his defence of the Franco-Ottoman treaty in the *Discours sur l’alliance*.

The central argument of the *Discours abrégé* is a pragmatic one, namely that a union of Christians could bring about the end of the Ottoman Empire, not necessarily that Catholics and Protestants should overcome their differences and unify. De Brèves’s assertion is situated in a line of thinking which regarded the fall of the Ottomans as inevitable. Such is the theme of Lucinge’s *De la naissance, durée et chute des estats*. And Loys Le Roy saw their fate as no different from that of all other empires.³¹ The close of the *Discours*, however, undermines the possibility of a Christian union:

Je n’ay point voulu, en ce discours, parler des moyens qu’il faudroit tenir pour unir toutes ces puissances, je laisseray cela au jugement de ceux qui ont cognoissance de la sorte qu’il s’y faudroit conduire, que moy, qui serviray tousjours en une occasion semblable, de soldat, de guide, et d’interprete, ayant appris, durant le long sejour que j’ay faict parmy eux, leur langue, et les chemins de leur pays. (p. 47)

It is with this sort of Gallic shrug that de Brèves brings his tract concerning the ruination of the Ottoman Empire to an end. The emphasis is on the plurality – ‘ces puissances’ – and the likely irreconcilability of Christendom. The *Discours abrégé des asseurez moyens d’aneantir & ruiner la Monarchie des Princes Ottoman*, contrary to what its title might suggest, is not a

rallying cry to crusade. La Noue's, on the other hand, is. He stated that his goal in writing was 'plus pour eschauffer les affections des personnes valeureuses à entreprendre, que pour donner conseil en la procedure de ceste haute entreprise' (p. 464). De Brèves seems to have taken an antithetical stance, giving advice on the procedure but not inciting anyone to actually carry out his plan. Lucinge offered more realistic advice than either La Noue or de Brèves, promoting as he did a campaign of instability in the Ottoman Empire by using propaganda to unsettle the Muslims in the Empire and encourage the Balkan Christians to revolt.³²

What we have seen then in the *Discours abrégé* does not add up to a compelling project. It lacks the earnestness of La Noue and the realism of Lucinge. In addition to his refusal to entertain how the disparate Christian powers might come together, de Brèves casts some doubt on the need to do so. He does not offer a portrait of barbarous Turks, instead depicting the Ottoman Empire as a legitimate political actor, albeit a powerful and ambitious one. Their might as he represents it – estimating that they have 800,000 troops – reads more as an implicit caution against a foolhardy invasion of the Ottoman Empire than it does a threat which must be dealt with. De Brèves's pragmatic moves do rather hint that the enterprise of an attack on the Ottoman Empire might not be advisable.

The treatise which follows, the *Discours sur l'alliance qu'a le Roy avec le grand Seigneur, & de l'utilité qu'elle apporte à la Chrestienté*, sheds further light on Savary de Brèves's attitude towards an anti-Ottoman crusade. Indeed, the *Discours sur l'alliance* is critical to understanding de Brèves's political thinking and to interpreting his *Discours abrégé*.³³ A much shorter work than the *Discours abrégé*, the *Discours sur l'alliance* appeals to the emotional associations of the term 'Chrestienté' to argue in favour of the Franco-Ottoman alliance. As noted above, diplomatic relations between France and Constantinople

had from their inception generated an array of opinions, positive and negative. Savary de Brèves is supportive of the pact, so much so, I would argue, that he regards it as preferable to an attack on Constantinople. We saw that in the *Discours abrégé* de Brèves stressed ‘le pouvoir [que l’Empire Ottoman] a de mal-faire à l’Europe, et par consequent, le soin que l’on doit prendre d’en empeschet l’effect’ (p. 14). In the *Discours sur l’alliance* he indicates that ‘le soin que l’on doit prendre’ is best exemplified by a pragmatic concord between France and the Ottoman Empire.

In the *Discours sur l’alliance* Savary de Brèves foregrounds the Franco-Ottoman alliance’s ‘utilité à tous les Princes de la Chrestienté’ (p. 3). He attempts to minimise the significance of French political concerns, insisting that ‘[nos Roys] ne conservent pas ceste amitié, pour leur interest particulier, ny celui de leurs sujets, mais encore pour le bien universel de la Chrestienté’ (p. 5). The rhetorical exaggeration intended to strengthen his case, apparent in his use of ‘universel’, is a feature of the text: de Brèves opts for the superlative ‘toute’ when suggesting the commercial gains of the pact are not reserved for France alone: ‘les marchands François, et ceux qui veulent arborer nostre estendart, en chargent leurs vaisseaux, et les distribuent ainsi par toute l’Europe’ (p. 5). As in the *Discours abrégé* where de Brèves positioned the Ottomans as more of a political threat than a religious enemy, he here chooses to emphasise the political nature of the Empire more so than its theology. The difference is that in the *Discours sur l’alliance* he argues for taking advantage of this notion, representing the sultan not as an intractable foe but as someone with whom they could do business.

Religious rhetoric does not disappear, though, since it fulfils an important role in justifying political action. De Brèves points out the practical benefits to Christendom of the 1604 Capitulations: they allow ‘les pelerins de toutes nations’ to visit ‘les saints lieux, avec

toute seureté' (p. 9), and they grant permission for six or seven monasteries to operate in Constantinople so that 'Dieu y est servi avec le mesme culte et presque pareille liberté, que l'on peut faire au milieu de la France' (p. 6). In presenting the case for the advantages of the Franco-Ottoman treaty, de Brèves relies on the emotive language of Christianity. He rejoices that the Capitulations afford protections to Christians who live under Ottoman rule: 'Quel contentement de voir au milieu de l'Estat des infidelles, florir le nom Chrestien?' (p. 8). And he includes the text of three letters sent to him by pope Clement VIII, deferring to the spiritual leader of Christendom – Roman Catholic Christendom at least – to support his argument that the alliance is beneficial for the Christian world (pp. 11-15).

Savary de Brèves's championing of Christians in Ottoman lands reveals a preoccupation with fluidity, movement and cooperation. His *Discours sur l'alliance* is an homage to the circulation of people and goods. The treaty, which he negotiated and is here advocating, allows pilgrims to travel across the Ottoman Empire and makes it possible for 'toutes sortes de nations Chrestiennes, de trafiquer chez eux' (p. 5). These cultural transfers and exchanges break down the grand narrative of opposition and hostility that underpins the *Discours abrégé* and other crusade plans. To de Brèves, the Ottoman Empire is separated from Christendom not by hostile, insurmountable, fixed frontiers but by malleable contact zones. From his viewpoint – the viewpoint of someone who travels between cultures – the world looks mixed, not divided into binaries.

As the plural 'nations Chrestiennes' makes clear, Christendom as it is conceived in the *Discours sur l'alliance* is diverse, not a monolithic unit. Transfers of people and goods between the west and the Ottoman Empire do not erase the fragmentation of Christianity: 'la conservation du nom Chrestien, et de la Religion Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine, dans leur pays, sera jugée tres-importante' (p. 5). While de Brèves appeals to an expansive

Christendom to justify the Franco-Ottoman alliance, the concerns of the counter-Reformation Catholic Church are of particular importance in his thinking. As with the *Discours abrégé*, the *Discours sur l'alliance* is not interested in promoting a reunified Christian community that overcomes confessional difference. Christendom is a useful notion for de Brèves, serving as it does as the emotional and rhetorical packaging of a diplomatic initiative in the interests of France and, by extension, the state religion, Roman Catholic Christianity. He is comfortable in conceiving of allegiance and belonging in onion-like layers, with Christianity an outer layer around Catholicism.

French political interest is thus paramount, even though de Brèves plays down its centrality in favour of a rhetorical appeal to Christendom. He acknowledges that the initial impetus behind François I's overtures to Suleiman was a national matter: '[le Roy] injustement pressé par les entreprises sur ceste Monarchie, de Charles quint, du Roy d'Angleterre, et de la plus-part des Princes de la Chrestienté' (pp. 3-4). 'Chrestienté', then, is turned in on itself, riven not only by religious disputes but also by competing political units. France is unsurprisingly cast in the role of victim, threatened by coreligionists for political and economic gain, not for ideological or cultural reasons. In this way, Savary de Brèves presents the Franco-Ottoman alliance as the necessary defence for a Christian power, France, which benevolently secures rights and privileges for the whole of Christendom, including those rival powers. Although, as a matter of fact, French traders were competing with merchants from elsewhere in Europe, the Venetians and the English cooperating against the French as Marseilles-based trade in Ottoman lands had cut into their profitability.³⁴

De Brèves's concern for France above all is most clearly revealed when he suggests that relations with the Ottomans could be useful in the event of a Habsburg invasion of French territory. He reveals that he would not be averse to an Ottoman military attack in

Europe – the potential for which is the basis of his argument in favour of a crusade in the *Discours abrégé* – if it came at the expense of a rival and for the safety of France:

la mesme consideration qui fait naistre ceste amitié, peut convier sa Majesté, de la conserver et d'en faire estat: dautant qu'elle n'est pas assurée d'estre tousjours en bonne intelligence avec ses voisins, et pourroit arriver par succession de temps, que les Princes de l'Empire, jaloux de sa grandeur, voudroient troubler son repos. Ce qu'avenant, il seroit fort aisé de destourner leur armes, par l'entremise du Turc, lequel en mettant une puissante armée sur pied, et envoyant du costé de Hongrie, pourroit traverser leurs desseins, et les obliger à retourner chez eux, pour défendre leur pays, et empescher la ruine dont telle puissance les menasseroit. (p. 9)

The Ottoman Empire is regarded as less of a menace than their neighbours in Europe, Spain being the real threat that French policy aimed to counterbalance.³⁵ The Holy Roman Empire, acting as a buffer between France and Ottoman territory, shaped a distinctively French perception of international relations. For the sake of France, de Brèves would not be opposed to the Ottomans advancing further into the continent. La Noue took the opposite view, decrying that 'du costé de la mer nous avons ces barbares pres de nos portes, et du costé de la terre, nous les avons dedans nos portes' (p. 439). With his possessive adjectives, La Noue articulates a much wider imagined community, 'la Chrestienté', shaped by opposition to the 'barbares' Turks. De Brèves, as mentioned above, does not use the descriptor 'barbare'. Whereas La Noue fears the Ottoman Empire is close at hand, de Brèves perceives it is distant from France. Whereas La Noue wants to unify fragmented Christendom, de Brèves is apparently unconcerned by confessional division. In the *Discours abrégé* he imagines that a successful crusade would not restore Christian unity: 'Il seroit aussi necessaire, si ce dessein estoit aggréé desdits Princes, qui en faciliteroient la conquête, par l'effort de leurs armes; qu'il se fist un project du partage, afin que (Dieu permettant la victoire) l'on évitast les débats qui pourroient, pour ce regard, arriver entre eux'. (p. 47)

The plan which Savary de Brèves outlines is therefore not one that dissolves differences. Rather, the warring parties would remain separate entities, each expecting material spoils from the Ottoman defeat. The spread of Christianity at the expense of Islam would evidently not be sufficient. Although de Brèves thinks that to be successful an attack on Constantinople would have to be a collective endeavour, the good of the collective is important only insofar as it advances the interests of the individual political units – France above all.

Reading Savary de Brèves's two treatises together, it is clear that the author regards the interests of France to lie squarely with the Franco-Ottoman treaty rather than a general assault on Constantinople. The views expressed in the *Discours sur l'alliance* must influence a reading of the crusade project of the *Discours abrégé*. The arrangement of the two tracts is significant. It was de Brèves's intention, as we saw above, that the *Discours abrégé* is read first. In this light, the attack on the Ottoman Empire seems an unlikely dream, its illusionary quality enhanced by the pragmatic and realistic *Discours sur l'alliance* which follows. Read separately, the *Discours abrégé* may seem an earnest project. Read after the *Discours sur l'alliance* it may signal a beacon of hope for the future. By positioning the *Discours abrégé* first, de Brèves makes the plan an unrealistic fantasy. Ostensibly paradoxical, the two texts represent two conflicting poles of foreign policy positions: national interest, on the one hand, and religion, on the other.³⁶ Savary de Brèves's two tracts make public this tension. We can, however, speculate that the personal sentiments of this fluent Turkish speaker – who spent over twenty years with the Ottoman court and established an Arabic printing press in Rome and then France – are likely to have been rather positive towards the Ottomans, or at the very least less hostile towards them than we might expect from an early modern European.³⁷

Indeed, Savary de Brèves seems to reserve his hostility for the Spanish. When he wrote to the French king Louis XIII in 1624, he included an updated version of the *Discours*

sur l'alliance which emphasises above all the threat of the king of Spain who seeks to 'parvenir a la Monarchie Chrestienne'.³⁸ He includes a *Discours tres important des affaires de la Mer et des moyens que Dieu a donnez a vostre Majesté pour empescher les desseins qu'a le Roy Catholique de se rendre absolu Seigneur de toute l'Europe comme il fera s'il n'y est remedié* (fol. 25^r) in which he argues that the strength of the French military is 'le seul obstacle qu'il [le Roy d'Espagne] a pour devenir absolu Seigneur de toute l'Europe' (fol. 26^v). These are not the words of someone advocating Christian unity but of someone genuinely protective of French self-interest and fearful of Habsburg power.

Savary de Brèves had left Constantinople before he published his political tracts. It is likely that the *Discours abrégé* and the *Discours sur l'alliance* were written during his next diplomatic posting when he was French ambassador to the Holy See. In his initial instructions at the outset of de Brèves's mission in May 1608, Henri IV directed de Brèves to send the pope (Paul V) his wishes for a pontificate that would be prosperous for 'la Republique Chrestienne' (fol. 4); to impress upon the pope his duty to care for peace in 'toute la Republique Chrestienne ja par trop affligée et discordante en soy' (fol. 32); to extol peace between France and Spain for 'le bien universel de la Chrestienté' (fol. 39); and to speak of all the good the Franco-Ottoman alliance has done for 'Chrestiens' should the pope discuss his desire for crusade (fol. 44).³⁹ The king's rhetorical use of the language of Christianity is echoed in the letters de Brèves sent to his monarch from Rome. For instance, he describes certain initiatives as 'utile à la Republique Chrestienne' (fol. 68) or designed for 'le bien de la Chrestienté' (fol. 69).

The political and rhetorical uses to which Savary de Brèves later puts the term Christendom in his political tracts are on evidence in his diplomatic correspondence. He reports to his king that he said to the pope:

Je ne trouve pas Tres Saint Pere que les Espagnols qui portent le nom de Catholiques ayent moins de volonté de mal faire, et troubler le repos de la France et du reste de la Chrestienté que les heretiques. Combien de fois sous pretexte de Religion ont ils trompé vostre Saincteté et ses Predecesseurs. (fols 226-7)

As part of a strategy of attempting to gain favour at the papal court de Brèves lambasts the Spanish. It is not just their actions he criticises but also their recourse to religion as a justification. He objects to the politics of language as practised by the Spanish, while at the same time using language politically himself. His words are carefully chosen to be persuasive. He includes the commonplace idea of ‘le repos de la Chrestienté’, relying on its rhetorical and emotional force to condemn the Spanish for upsetting the theoretical unity of Christendom as much as, if not more than, confessional division had done. The language that Savary de Brèves adopts in his treatises on the Ottoman Empire is the same as that which he used on a day-to-day basis at the Vatican and in reporting on his activities and discussions at the papal court. Whether he was outlining a plan for a crusade to Constantinople or defending France’s alliance with the Ottoman Empire, de Brèves argued his case with reference to Christendom.

Conclusion

In supporting the new king Henri IV and rejecting his own relative, Jacques Savary de Lancosme, and the Catholic League, François Savary de Brèves revealed that his loyalties lay squarely with French interests, over and above any ties of religion. The same outlook can be seen in his publication of two tracts on the Ottoman Empire, the *Discours abrégé des asseurez moyens d’aneantir & ruiner la Monarchie des Princes Ottomans* and the *Discours sur l’alliance qu’a le Roy avec le grand Seigneur, & de l’utilité qu’elle apporte à la Chrestienté*. Ostensibly paradoxical in intent, these texts in fact reflect the realities of geopolitics. De Brèves’s sympathy clearly lies with the promotion of French commercial and

political advantages rather than a commitment to the mutual hostility of Christianity and Islam. In spite of his intimate knowledge of the Ottoman court, de Brèves's crusade plan is not startlingly different from earlier published projects. Considered in relation to the *Discours sur l'alliance*, de Brèves's project – and by extension any *grand dessein* against Constantinople – seems to be framed as an impossible fantasy.⁴⁰ What is most notable about the *Discours abrégé* is that it demonstrates that those involved in the execution of French foreign policy felt it prudent to show public support for a crusade, while nonetheless pushing for closer Franco-Ottoman relations. De Brèves's public attempts to raise awareness of Islamic culture – through his printing press and ultimately unsuccessful efforts at establishing a college of oriental languages in Paris – made him subject to rumours that he was Muslim.⁴¹ Written support for crusade may have been intended to protect his reputation. Equally, following his fall from royal favour and dismissal from his post as tutor to Louis XIII's brother, the appearance of these treatises will have reminded the public of the expertise of the former ambassador and the vital role he played in propagating French interests abroad.

Personal motivations aside, by publishing his work de Brèves was entering the debate about the ethics of the Franco-Ottoman alliance. In doing so, he made clear the paradox of European thinking about the Turk, namely the existence of clashing conceptions of the Ottoman Empire's relationship with the West, a vision of warfare and a vision of cooperation. This double discourse shows that the crusading tradition and anti-Turkish sentiment remained strong in the seventeenth century, though more tolerant attitudes were emerging. The competing narratives of crusade and cooperation should be mutually exclusive, but in de Brèves's publication they are not. He offers a vision of community focussed on the movements of people and goods across permeable boundaries. His advocacy of relations with the Ottoman Empire represents, as Miller has put it, 'the coming predominance of commerce, rather than military conflict, as the main form of the interaction

between West and East'.⁴² But in order to justify his thinking de Brèves has to use a conception of hostility, has to appeal to an idea of Christendom as the ideological antithesis of the Ottoman Empire. He argues that in the face of a powerful religious enemy, the ethical course of action is to cooperate. For de Brèves the Franco-Ottoman alliance was not a temporary expediency until a successful crusade could be launched, but a desirable long-term foreign policy objective.

Notes

¹ The only modern study of de Brèves is an unpublished doctoral thesis which is concerned solely with his time as ambassador in Constantinople: Petitcherc, "François Savary de Brèves, ambassadeur". His scholarly work has attracted some attention: Duverdier, "Savary de Brèves et Ibrahim Müteferrika". He has recently been mentioned as a formative influence on the intellectual Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, and André du Ryer, the first person to translate the Qu'ran into French (indeed the first to translate it into any vernacular language). See Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, and Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer*. Miller calls de Brèves 'the éminence grise behind a number of scholars and a variety of initiatives' (39).

² Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, 36-7.

³ Panaite, "French Capitulations and Consular Jurisdiction," 71. For a description of the documents, see Panaite, "A French Ambassador".

⁴ Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, 30.

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges*, 143.

⁷ MacLean, *Re-Orienting the Renaissance*.

⁸ Key studies include Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, which put trade between east and west at the centre of the history of the Renaissance, and Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar*, which explored the influence of cultural cross-fertilisation on art and learning.

⁹ MacLean, "Introduction". Rouillard's classic work (*The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature*) highlighted the cordial relations between France and the Ottoman Empire. More recent work has dealt with Franco-Ottoman relations during this period: Mansel, "The French Renaissance in Search of the Ottoman Empire", and Barthe, *French Encounters with the Ottomans*.

¹⁰ For a fuller account of the development of Franco-Ottoman relations over the course of the sixteenth century see Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel*, 23-48.

¹¹ Isom-Verhaaren offers a comprehensive response to such historiography, tracing how closely the Ottoman Empire was involved in the military and diplomatic affairs of Christian powers following their capture of Constantinople in 1453 and subsequent expansion into the Mediterranean (*Allies with the Infidel*, 23-48).

¹² Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel*, 25-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43-4.

¹⁵ Heath, *Crusading Commonplaces*, 41-3. Rouillard has written of ‘the traditional talk of a new crusade which persisted with surprising vitality throughout the period [1520-1660]’ (*The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature*, 355).

¹⁶ *Discours politiques et militaires*, 430.

¹⁷ In a speech reported by his brother, Monluc, *Commentaires*, 85-6.

¹⁸ Thomas et al., *Western and Southern Europe*, 415.

¹⁹ The edition, which also included the articles of the treaty and a third treatise which offered an account of de Brèves’s time as Gaston’s governor (*Discours veritable fait par le sieur de Brèves, du procédé tenu lorsqu’il remit entre les mains du roi la personne de Monseigneur le duc d’Anjou, frère unique de Sa Majesté*) is undated. Duverdier judges the date of publication to be 1618 (“Les circonstances favorables,” 177). Publishing the treaty and the three treatises in one volume offered a public demonstration of de Brèves’s utility to French diplomacy and court life.

²⁰ That did not, however, prevent the texts from circulating independently. The *Discours abrégé*, for example, was published in a 1666 collection of texts about the Ottoman Empire: Dumay, *Recueil historique*.

²¹ De Brèves, *Discours sur l’alliance*, 1. All editions of the text I have consulted paginate the two tracts separately. For all future references to both texts I shall use the pagination to be found in the posthumous *Relation des voyages de Monsieur de Brèves* of 1628, which can be found online and is thus the most accessible volume for the reader. The *Relation* was edited by Jacques du Castel and consists of an account of de Brèves’s journey through North Africa after quitting Constantinople for France, likely written by de Brèves’s secretary Jean-Baptiste Vinois de Bavon. Following the travel account, which runs to 383 pages, are the articles of the 1604 treaty and the three discourses penned by de Brèves. The ordering remains the same as in the editions published by de Brèves; the treaty is followed by the *Discours abrégé*, then the *Discours sur l’alliance*, with the

Discours veritable placed at the end. Curiously, though the order was unchanged, the contents page of the *Relation* lists the *Discours sur l'alliance* before the *Discours abrégé*.

²² Heath, *Crusading Commonplaces*, 9.

²³ For a study of Erasmus's views of a war against the Turks see Ron, "The Christian Peace of Erasmus".

²⁴ Heath examines these two works at length in *Crusading Commonplaces*.

²⁵ For an overview of seventeenth-century French crusade plans see Bilici, "Les projets de croisade français".

²⁶ Heath, *Crusading Commonplaces*, 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁸ La Noue, *Discours politiques et militaires*, 440.

²⁹ Crouzet provides a good assessment of the term in "Sur le concept de barbarie".

³⁰ Heath, *Crusading Commonplaces*, 63-4.

³¹ Le Roy, *De la vicissitude ou variété des choses*, 92^v – 96^v.

³² Heath, *Crusading Commonplaces*, 74-75.

³³ However, scholars who have written about the *Discours abrégé* tend not to refer to the *Discours sur l'alliance*. This is true of Petitclerc's examination of de Brèves's Ottoman embassy and Heath's study of crusade texts. Bilici notes that the two tracts appeared in the same volume but he does not consider the implications of the *Discours sur l'alliance* in his discussion of the *Discours abrégé* ("Les projets de croisade français," 321-4). By contrast, Duverdier calls the treatises 'les deux faces d'une même politique' ("Les circonstances favorables," 178), arguing that de Brèves hoped for an eventual crusade but supports an alliance as a temporary expediency. I argue the contrary, that de Brèves was not a champion of crusade but of cooperation.

³⁴ Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-9. Franco-Habsburg rivalry would eventually lead to France's intervention in the Thirty Years' War.

³⁶ For an examination of the conflict between secular and religious imperatives in seventeenth-century French foreign policy see Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State*. A more recent study is Sturdy, *Richelieu and Mazarin: A Study in Statesmanship*.

³⁷ As has been mentioned, travellers to the Ottoman Empire often held positive views of the culture they encountered. For a comprehensive study see Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature*.

³⁸ De Brèves, *Mémoires politiques et diplomatiques*, 2^r.

³⁹ *Copies des lettres et despesches de Monsieur de Brèves*.

⁴⁰ Rouillard writes: ‘all the evidence of his embassy indicates that the latter [alliance] represented his own feeling, while the crusade project was composed after his recall in accord with the short-lived *grand dessein* of Henri IV and the Pope’ (*The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature*, 362-3). I argue that the textual evidence also supports this view but, moreover, indicates that the juxtaposition of the two treatises serves to undermine the desirability of crusade.

⁴¹ Thomas et al., *Western and Southern Europe*, 417-8.

⁴² Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, 39.

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